

A MINIATURE PORTRAIT OF JOSEPH

NO. 1610

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*"The Lord was with Joseph."
Genesis 39:2.*

SCRIPTURE frequently sums up a man's life in a single sentence. Here is the biography of Joseph sketched by Inspiration—"God was with him," so Stephen testified in his famous speech recorded in Acts 7:9. Here is the life story of Abraham—"Abraham believed God." Of Moses, we read, "The man Moses was very meek." Take a New Testament life, such as that of John the Baptist, and you have it in a line—"John did no miracles, but all things that he spoke concerning Jesus were true." The mere name of John—"that disciple whom Jesus loved"—would serve for an epitaph of him. It pictures both the man and his history. Holy Scripture excels in this kind of full-length miniature paintings! Michelangelo is said to have drawn a portrait with a single stroke of his crayon, and so the Spirit of God sketches a man's life in a single sentence—"The Lord was with Joseph." Observe, however, that the portraits of Scripture give us not only the *outer*, but the *inner* life of the man. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks upon the heart, and so the Scriptural description of men are not of their visible life, alone, but of their spiritual life. Here we have Joseph as God saw him, the *real* Joseph. Externally it did not always appear that God was with him, for Joseph did not always seem to be a prosperous man. But when you come to look into the inmost soul of this servant of God, you see his true likeness—he lived in communion with the Most High, and God blessed him—"The Lord was with Joseph and he was a prosperous man."

Dear friends, how would you like to have your *inner* biography sketched? How would your soul appear, if set out in detail before the entire world as to its desires, affections and thoughts? Many lives have looked well on paper, but beneath their surface the biographer never dared to dive, or, perhaps, could *not* have dived had he been anxious to do so! It is often thought wise, in writing a man's life, to suppress certain matters. This may be prudent if the design is to guard a reputation, but it is scarcely truthful. The Spirit of God does not suppress the faults, even, of those whom we most admire, but writes them fully, like the Spirit of Truth, as He is. The man who, above others, was "a man after God's own heart," was yet, in some points, exceedingly faulty, and he committed one foul deed which will remain, through all time, a blemish upon his character. There was in David so firm and undeviating an attachment to the Lord God and so sincere a desire to do right—and so deep a repentance when he had erred—that the Lord still regarded him as after His own heart although He smote him heavily for his transgressions. David was a truly sincere man in spite of the faults into which he fell and it is the *heart* of David which is sketched. So here, the Spirit is not looking so much at Joseph as a favorite child, or an Egyptian prime minister, as at the innermost and truest Joseph, and therefore He thus describes him, "the Lord was with Joseph." This striking likeness of Joseph strongly reminds us of our Master and Lord, that *greater* Joseph, who is Lord over the entire world for the sake of Israel.

Peter, in his sermon to the household of Cornelius, said of our Lord that He "went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; *for God was with Him.*" Exactly what had been said of Joseph! It is wonderful that the same words should describe both Jesus and Joseph; the perfect Savior and the imperfect patriarch! When you and I are perfected in divine grace, we shall wear the image of Christ and that which will describe Christ will also describe us! Those who live with Jesus will be transformed by His fellowship till they become like He. To my mind, it is very beautiful to see the resemblance between the First-Born and the rest of the family; between the great typical Man, the Second Adam and all those men who are quickened into His life and are one with Him. This having the Lord with

us is the inheritance of all the saints, for what is the apostolic benediction in the Epistles but a desire that the Triune God may be with us? To the church in Rome, Paul says, "Now the God of peace be with you all." To the church in Corinth, he writes, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen." To the Thessalonians, he says, "The Lord be with you all." Did not our glorious Lord say, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world"? How better could I salute you this morning than in the words of Boaz to the reapers, "The Lord be with you"? What kinder answer could you give me than, "The Lord bless you"?

High up upon the mountains which form the back wall of Mentone I happened, one day, to meet a Quaker in the usual costume. He was a warm-hearted lover of all who love Jesus. He saluted me and we found great unity of spirit. On parting, I said, "Friend, the Lord be with you." And he answered, "And with your spirit," adding, "It is the first bit of the liturgy that I have ever used." Truly, the more often we can use it with our hearts, the better, for none can object to it! Thus do I say to all of you this day, "The Lord be with you!" And I know that you are responding, "And with your spirit." May you find that your desire is granted, by the Holy Spirit's being with my spirit that I may speak words which shall refresh your hearts!

Now let us think of Joseph and see what we can learn from him. "The Lord was with Joseph." Let us consider, first, the fact; secondly, the evidence of that fact; and thirdly, the result of that fact.

I. First, we will run over Joseph's life and note THE FACT—"The Lord was with Joseph." God was gracious to Joseph as a child. His father loved him because he was the son of his old age and also because of the gracious qualities which he saw in him. Before he was 17 years of age, God had spoken with him in dreams and visions of the night, of which we read that, "His brothers envied him; but his father observed the saying." Dear young people, it may *not* be that God will appear to you in dreams, but He has other ways of speaking to His young Samuels. You remember He said, "Samuel, Samuel," and the beloved child answered, "Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears." May you answer in the same manner to the call of God by His word. It was the happy privilege of some of us before we had left boyhood and girlhood to have received gracious communications from God—He led us to repentance, He led us to faith in Christ and He revealed His love in our hearts before we had left the schoolroom and the playground! They begin well who begin early with Christ! He will be with us to the end if we are with Him at the beginning! If Joseph had not been a godly boy, he might never have been a gracious man. Divine grace made him to differ from his brothers in youth, and he remained their superior all his days. If we are gracious while we are yet children, we may be sure that the Lord will be gracious to us even should we live to old age and see our children's children.

Early piety is likely to be eminent piety. Happy are those who have Christ with them in the morning, for they shall walk with Him all day and sweetly rest with Him at eventide. "The Lord was with Joseph" when Joseph was at home and He did not desert him when he was sent away from his dear father and his beloved home and was sold for a slave. Bitter is the lot of a slave in *any* country and it was worst of all in those early days. We are told by Stephen that the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt—but the Lord was with him—even when Joseph was being sold the Lord was with him. It must have been a very dreadful journey for him across the desert, urged onward by those rough Ishmaelites, probably traveling in a gang, as slaves do to this day in the center of Africa. May God put an end to the abominable system! This delicate child of an indulgent father, who had been clothed with a princely garment of many colors, must now wear the garb of a slave and march in the hot sun across the burning sand. But never was captive more submissive under cruel treatment. He endured as seeing Him who is invisible! His heart was sustained by a deep confidence in the God of his father, Jacob, for, "Jehovah was with him." I think I see him in the slave market exposed for sale. We have heard with what trembling anxiety the slave peers into the faces of those who are about to buy. Will he get a good master? Will one purchase him who will treat him like a man, or one who will use him worse than a brute? "The Lord was with Joseph" as he stood there to be sold and he fell into good hands!

When he was taken away to his master's house and the various duties of his service were allotted to him, the Lord was with Joseph. The house of the Egyptian had never been so pure, so honest, so honored before. Beneath Joseph's charge, it was secretly the temple of his devotions and manifestly the abode of comfort and confidence. That Hebrew slave had a glory of character about him which all perceived, and

especially his master, for we read—“His master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hands. And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him—and his master made him overseer over his house and all that he had, he put into Joseph’s hands. And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house and over all that he had, that the Lord blessed the Egyptian’s house for Joseph’s sake; and the blessing of the Lord was upon all that he had in the house and in the field.” Joseph’s diligence, integrity and gentleness won over his master, as well they might. O that all of you who are Christian servants would imitate Joseph in this and so behave yourselves that all around you may see that the Lord is with you! Then came a crisis in his history, the time of testing. We see Joseph tried by a temptation in which, alas, so many perish! He was attacked in a point at which youth is peculiarly vulnerable. His comely person made him the object of unholy solicitations from one upon whose goodwill his comfort greatly depended. And had it not been that the Lord was with him, he would have fallen. The mass of mankind would scarcely have blamed him had he sinned—they would have cast the crime upon the tempter, and excused the frailty of youth. I say not so! God forbid I should, for in acts of uncleanness, *neither* of the transgressors may be excused! But God was with Joseph and he did not slide when set in slippery places.

Thus Joseph escaped that deep pit into which the abhorred of the Lord fall. He was rescued from the snare of the strange woman, of whom Solomon has said, “She has cast down many wounded; yes, many strong men have been slain by her. Her house is the way to Hell, going down to the chambers of death.” Slavery, itself, was a small calamity compared with that which would have happened to young Joseph had he been enslaved by wicked passions. Happily, the Lord was with him and enabled him to overcome the tempter with the question, “How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?” He fled. That flight was the truest display of courage! It is the only way of victory in sins of the flesh. The apostle says, “Flee youthful lusts which war against the soul.” When Telemachus was in the isle of Calypso, his mentor cried, “Fly, Telemachus, fly! There remains no hope of a victory but by flight.” Wisely Joseph left his garment and fled, for God was with him. The scene shifts again and he who had been, first, a favored child at home and then a slave—and then a tempted one—now becomes a prisoner. The prisons of Egypt were, doubtless, as horrible as all such places were in the olden times and here is Joseph in the noisome dungeon! He evidently felt his imprisonment very much, for we are told in the Psalms that “the iron entered into his soul.” He felt it a cruel thing to be under such a slander and to suffer for his innocence. A young man so pure, so chaste, must have felt it to be sharper than a whip of scorpions to be accused as he was. Yet as he sat down in the gloom of his cell, the Lord was with him.

The degradation of a prison had not deprived him of his divine companion. Blessed be the name of the Lord, He does not forsake His people when they are in disgrace! No, He is more pleasant with them when they are falsely accused than at any other time and He cheers them in their low estate. God was with Joseph and very soon the kindly manners, the gentleness, the activity, the truthfulness, the industry of Joseph had won over the keeper of the prison so that Joseph rose, again, to the top and was the overseer of the prison! Like a cork, which you may push down, but it is sure to come up again, so was Joseph! He must swim—he could not drown—the Lord was with Him! The Lord’s presence made him a king and a priest wherever he went and men tacitly acknowledged his influence. In the little kingdom of the prison Joseph reigned, for, “God was with him.” He will rise higher than that, however, when opportunity arises for a display of prophetic power. Two of those under his charge appeared to be despondent one morning and, with his usual gentleness, Joseph asked, “Why do you look so sad today?” He was always kindly and sympathetic and so they told him their dreams and he interpreted them as the events actually fell out. But why did he interpret dreams? It was because God was with him! Joseph tells them, then and there, that “interpretations belong unto God.” It was not that he had knowledge of an occult art, or was clever at guessing, but the Spirit of God rested upon him and so he understood the secrets veiled beneath the dreams. This led to further steps, for after having been tried from 17 to 30—after having served 13 years’ apprenticeship to sorrow—he came to stand before Pharaoh and God is with him there, too!

You can see that he is inwardly held up, for the Hebrew youth stands boldly forth and talks of God in an idolatrous court! Pharaoh believed in multitudes of gods—he worshipped the crocodile, the ibis, the bull—and all manner of things, even down to leeks and onions, so that one said of the Egyptians,

“Happy people, whose gods grow in their own gardens!” But Joseph was not ashamed to speak of his God as the only living and true God. He said, “What God is about to do He showed unto Pharaoh.” Calmly, and in a dignified manner, he unravels the dream and explains it all to Pharaoh, disclaiming, however, all credit for wisdom. He says, “It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace.” God was with him, indeed! Joseph was made ruler over all Egypt and God was with him. Well did the king say, “Can we find such a man as this is in whom the Spirit of God is?” His policy in storing up corn in the plenteous years succeeded admirably, for God was evidently working by him to preserve the human race from extinction by famine. Joseph’s whole system, if looked at as executed in the interest of Pharaoh, his master, was beyond measure sensible and successful. He was not the *servant* of the Egyptians—Pharaoh had promoted him—and he enriched Pharaoh and, at the same time, saved a nation from hunger. God was with him in bringing down his father and the family into Egypt and locating them in Goshen. And God was with Joseph till he came to die, when he, “took an oath of the children of Israel, saying God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here.”

The Lord was with him and kept him faithful to the covenant and the covenanted race, even to the close of a long life of 110 years! He died faithful to the cause of the God of his fathers, for he would not be numbered with Egypt, with all its learning and all its wealth. He chose to be accounted an Israelite and to share with the chosen race whatever their fortunes might be. He, like the rest of the patriarchs, died in faith, looking for the promised inheritance, and for its sake, renouncing the riches and glories of the world, for the Lord was with him!

II. We shall next review THE EVIDENCE OF THE FACT that God was with him. What is the evidence that the Lord was with Joseph? The first evidence of it is this—he was always under the influence of the divine presence and lived in the enjoyment of it. I shall not need to quote the instances—not all of them, at any rate, for everywhere, whenever Joseph’s heart speaks—he lets you know that he is conscious that God is with him. Take him, especially, under temptation. Oh, what a mercy it was for him, that he was a God-fearing man! “How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against *Potiphar*?” No. Yet he *would* have sinned against Potiphar, who had been a kindly master to him. Does he say, “How shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against this woman”? For it would have been a sin against her. No! Just as David said, “Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight,” making the main point and consideration to be sin against *God*, so did Joseph, as he fled from the seducer, argue thus—“How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against *God*?” Oh, if you and I always felt that God were near, looking steadily upon us, we should not dare to sin! The presence of a superior often checks a man from doing what else he might have ventured on. And the presence of God, if it were realized, would be a perpetual barrier against temptation and would keep us steadfast in holiness!

When Joseph, at any time afterwards, spoke of God—when God helped him not only to stand against temptation but to do *any* service—you will notice how he always ascribes it to God. He will not interpret Pharaoh’s dream without first telling him, “It is not in me: God has showed Pharaoh what He is about to do.” He was as conscious of the presence of God when he stood before the great monarch as when he refused that sinful woman! It was the same in his domestic life. Let me read out of his family register. “And unto Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, which Asenath the daughter of Poti-Pherah, priest of On, bare unto him. And Joseph called the name of the first-born Manasseh: for God, said he, has made me forget all my toil, and all my father’s house. And the name of the second called he Ephraim: For God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.” When his aged father said to him, “Who are these?” Joseph replied very beautifully, “They are my sons, whom God has given me in this place.” I am afraid that we do not habitually talk in this fashion, but Joseph did. Without the slightest affectation, he spoke out of his heart, under a sense of the divine presence and working. How like he is, in this, to our divine Lord! I cannot help speaking of it. If there is any good thing more marked about our Lord Jesus than another it is His sense of the divine presence. You see it when He is a child—“Know you not that I must be about My Father’s business?” You hear it in the words, “I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.” And again, “I know that You hear Me always.” You perceive it forcibly in the last moment of His earthly life, when the sharpest pang that tortures Him is that which makes Him cry, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken me?” The presence of God was everything to Christ as it was to Joseph!

Now, if you and I set the Lord always before us—if our soul dwells in God—depend upon it, God is with us! There is no mistake about it. If you are under the influence of that text, “You, God, see me,” you may be sure that His presence will go with you and He will give you rest. No man ever perceived God to be present and, therefore, walked before Him in holiness, and afterwards discovered that he had been under a delusion. Grace in the life *proves* that the God of Grace is with us! The next evidence is this—God was certainly with Joseph because he was pure in heart. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” No other can do so. God will not manifest Himself to those whose hearts are unclean. He that has clean hands and a pure heart, he shall dwell on high. Our Lord Jesus said, “If a man loves Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love Him, and we will come unto Him, and make our abode with Him.” When the heart is shocked at sin and enamored of holiness, then it can enter into communion with God, but not till then. “Can two walk together unless they are agreed?” When I hear some professors admit that they have little communion with God, can I wonder at it? How can God have fellowship with us unless we walk obediently in His ways? What fellowship has light with darkness, or what concord has Christ with Belial? The intense purity of Joseph was proof that the thrice holy God was always with him! He will keep the feet of His saints. When they are tempted, He will deliver them from evil, for His presence sheds an atmosphere of holiness around the heart in which He dwells.

The next evidence in Joseph’s case was the diligence with which he exercised himself wherever he was. God was with Joseph and, therefore, the man of God hardly cared as to the outward circumstances of his position, but began at once to work that which is good. He was in the pit—yes, but the Lord was with him and the pit was not horrible to him. He pleaded with his brothers and although they would not hear, he did his duty in warning them of their crime. He was carried captive of the Ishmaelites, but in the caravan he was safe, for God was with him. When he came to be a slave in Potiphar’s house, the Lord was with him and he was a prosperous man! The change of scene was not a change of his dearest company! He did not strike an attitude and make a display of his grand intentions, but he went to work where he was and performed ordinary duties with great heartiness—for the Lord was with him! Many would have said, “I have been unrighteously sold for a slave. I ought not to be here and I am not bound to perform any duties for Potiphar. Rightfully I am a free man, as free as Potiphar, and I shall not work for him for nothing.” No, the Lord was with him, and therefore Joseph applied himself to that which lay next to hand and went to work with a will. No doubt he performed menial service in the house, at first, and then, by degrees, he rose to be the manager of the establishment. The truly godly man is ready for anything—he does not sigh for place, but accepts the state in which he is found—and does good in it, for the Lord’s sake. The Lord was with Joseph, none the less, when he was cast into the prison. Joseph *knew* God was with him in prison, and therefore he did not sit down sullenly in his sorrow, but he bestirred himself to make the best of his afflicted condition.

Since the Lord was with him there, he was comforted. It would be infinitely better to be in prison with God than on the throne of Pharaoh without God! He did not mourn and moan and spend his time in writing petitions to Potiphar, or making appeals to Potiphar. He set himself to be of service to his fellow prisoners and the wardens and very soon he was at the front, again, for, “The Lord was with him.” When he came to be exalted and Pharaoh made him ruler over Egypt, notice what he did! He did not strut about, or take his case to court. He did not stop to enjoy his honors in peace and leave others to do the business, but he set to his work, *personally* and at once! Read Genesis 41:45—“And Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt.” Then read the next verse—“And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh and went throughout all the land of Egypt.” No sooner did he get the office than he gave himself to the execution of it, personally inspecting the whole country! Many are so worn out by their toils in getting a position that they have no strength left for performing their duties. When they get a new position, their first consideration is how they shall spend the profits from it. Place-hunters seldom try to make themselves fit for the position, but crave the position whether they are fit for it or not! Many, when they get an office, are exceedingly skillful in showing how *not* to do it—they get into the office and pass on everything to the next clerk, and he to the next, so that nothing is done! Procrastination is the very hinge of business and punctuality the thief of time. They do as little as they can for the money, upon the theory that if you are too energetic your labors will be too cheap.

Joseph, however, was not of that sort, for no sooner was he made commissioner-general of Egypt, than he was up to his eyes in the task of building storehouses and gathering up grain to fill them. By his wonderful economic policy, he supplied the people in the time of famine and in the process, the power of Pharaoh was greatly strengthened. The Lord was with him—therefore he did not think of the honor to which he had been promoted, but of the responsibility which had been laid upon him—and he gave himself wholly to his great work. That is what you and I must do if we are to give practical proof that God is with us! But notice again, God was with Joseph and that made him tender and sympathetic. Some men who are prompt enough in business are rough, coarse, hard—but not Joseph! His tenderness distinguishes him. He is full of loving consideration. When he had prisoners in his charge, he did not treat them roughly, but with much consideration. He watched their countenances, enquired into their troubles and was willing to do all in his power for them. This was one secret of his success in life—he was everybody's friend. He who is willing to be the servant of all, the same shall be the chief of all. God was with Joseph and taught him compassion, for God, Himself, is very pitiful and full of sympathy for the suffering. Perhaps you will object to this, that Joseph seemed, for a while, to afflict and tantalize his brothers. By no means! He was seeking their good. The love he bore to them was wise and prudent. God, who is far more loving than Joseph, frequently afflicts us to bring us to repentance and to heal us of many evils. Joseph wished to bring his brothers into a right state of heart and he succeeded in it, though the process was more painful to him than to them!

At last he could not restrain himself, but burst into weeping before them all, for there was a big loving heart under the Egyptian garb of Joseph! He loved with all his soul and so will every man who has God with him, for “God is love.” If you do not love, God is not with you. If you go through the world selfish and morose, bitter, suspicious, bigoted, hard—the *devil* is with you! God is not for where God is. He expands the spirit! He causes us to love all mankind with the love of benevolence and He makes us take a sweet complacency in the chosen brotherhood of Israel, so that we especially delight to do good to all those who are of the household of faith. This was a mark that God was with Joseph. Another mark of God's presence with Joseph was his great wisdom. He did everything as it ought to be done. You can scarcely alter anything in Joseph's life to improve it and I think if I admire his wisdom in one thing more than another it is in his wonderful silence. It is easy to talk, comparatively easy to talk well, but to be quiet is the difficulty! He never said a word that I can learn, about Potiphar's wife. It seemed necessary to his defense, but he would not accuse the woman. He let judgment go by default and left her to her own conscience and her husband's cooler consideration. This showed great power. It is hard for a man to compress his lips, saying nothing, when his character is at stake. So eloquent was Joseph in his silence that there is not a word of complaint throughout the whole record of his life.

We cannot say that of all the Bible saints, for many of them complained bitterly! Indeed, we have whole books of lamentations! We do not condemn those who *did* complain, but we greatly admire those, who like sheep before the shearers, were dumb. The iron entered into his soul, but he does not tell us so—we look to the Psalms for that information. He bore in calm resignation all the great Father's will. When his brothers stood before him—the cruel men who sold him—he did not upbraid them. In fact, he comforted them, saying, “Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that you sold me here: for God did send me before you to preserve life.” Making sweet excuse for them, he said, “And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save yourselves by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me here, but God.” How different from the spirit of those people who pry about, seeking to discover faults, and when an imperfection is marked, they cry, “Look! Did you see that? I told you so! These good men are no better than they should be.” Yes, it may be true that there are spots in the sun, but there are greater spots in your eyes or you would see more of the light of God! Those who see faults so readily have plenty of their own. Like the man who stole the goods and ran away, they try to turn the scent by calling, “Thief, thief,” after others! May God make us blind to the faults of His people sooner than allow us to have a lynx eye for their flaws and an inventive faculty to ascribe ill motives to them! I wish we were as wisely silent as Joseph was. We may often repent of speech, but I think very seldom of silence. You may complain and be justified in the complaint, but you will have far more glory if you do not complain!

For what was there, after all, for Joseph to complain of, since the Lord was with him? He was in prison—that is something to complain of. Yes, but if the Lord was with him, the prison was no longer dreary! I would gladly go to prison any day if the Lord would be with me! Who would not? But Joseph was away from his beloved father and the trotting of those little feet that he loved so much to hear—the feet of little brother Benjamin. I am sure Joseph always missed his mother’s only other son, his only full brother. It was a great grief to him to be away from home, but still, he was quiet, calm and happy. God is with him, if Benjamin is not! If father Jacob is away, God is present! And thus he finds no cause for bitter lament, but much reason for accepting his lot and doing his best in each condition. “God was with him” and this is the last evidence I give of it—that he was kept faithful to the covenant, faithful to Israel and to Israel’s God right through. Pharaoh gave him, in marriage, the daughter of a priest. And the priests were the highest class throughout Egypt—so Joseph was thus promoted to nobility by marriage, as well as to be at the head of all the nobility by office. They cried before him, “Bow the knee,” and everyone honored him throughout all the land of Egypt. Yet he would not be an Egyptian—he was an Israelite, still, and his good old father, when he came down into Egypt, found him one of the family in heart and soul! His father’s blessing was greatly prized by Joseph, and he obtained it for himself and for his sons.

I notice with much pain that many professors who prosper in this world have not God with them, for they turn into Egyptians—they do not, now, care for the simple worship of God’s people—they sigh for something showy, and more respectable! They need society and so they seek out a fashionable church and swallow their principles! They lay it all upon their children, for who can expect young ladies and gentlemen to attend an ordinary meeting house where such low people go? For the sake of the young people, they are bound to mix with society, and so they leave their principles, their people and their God! They become Egyptians! Indeed, some of them would become devil-worshippers to gain rank and status! Off they go to Egypt, shoals of them! I have seen it and shall see it again. If some of you get rich, I dare say *you* will do the same—it seems to be the way of men—as soon as a professor prospers in the world he is ashamed of the truth of God he once loved. Such apostates will find it heavy work to die! Verily, I say unto you, instead of *their* being ashamed of *us*, we have good reason to be ashamed of them, for it is to their disgrace that they cannot be content to associate with God’s chosen because they happen to be poor, and perhaps illiterate! Joseph stuck to his people and to their God—though he must live in Egypt, he will not be an Egyptian! He will not even leave his *dead body* to lie in an Egyptian pyramid! The Egyptians built a very costly tomb for Joseph—it stands to this day, but his body is not there. “I charge you,” he said, “take my bones with you, for I do not belong to Egypt. My place is in the land of promise.” “He gave commandment concerning his bones.”

Let others do as they will, as for me my lot is cast with those who follow the Lord fully. Yes, my Lord, where you dwell, I will dwell. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God, and may my children be your children to the last generation. If the Lord is with you, that is what you will say, but if He is not with you and you prosper in the world, and increase in riches, you will turn your back on Christ and His people—and we shall have to say, as Paul did, “Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world.”

III. Thirdly, let us observe THE RESULT OF GOD’S BEING WITH JOSEPH. The result was that, “He was a prosperous man.” But notice that although the Lord was with Joseph, it did not screen him from hatred, “The Lord was with him, but his brothers hated him. “Yes, and if the Lord loves a man, the world will spite him. We know that we are God’s children because the adversaries of God are *our* adversaries! Furthermore, “The Lord was with Joseph,” but it did not screen him from temptation of the worst kind—it did not prevent his master’s wife casting her wicked eyes upon him. The best of men may be tempted to the worst of crimes. The presence of God did not screen him from slander—the base woman accused him of outrageous wickedness and God permitted Potiphar to believe her. You and I would have said, “If the Lord is with us, how can this evil happen to us?” Ah, but the Lord *was* with him and yet he was a slandered man! No, the divine presence did not screen him from pain, either. He sat in prison wearing fetters till the iron entered into his soul, and yet, “The Lord was with him.” That presence did not save him from disappointment. He said to the butler, “Think of me when it is well with you.” But the butler forgot him altogether! Everything may seem to go against you, and yet God may be with

you. The Lord does not promise you that you shall have what looks like prosperity, but you shall have what is *real* prosperity in the best sense.

Now, what did God's being with Joseph do for him? First, it saved him from gross sin. He flees, he shuts his ears—he flees and conquers—for God is with him! O young friend, if God is with you in the hour of temptation, you will need no better, no grander result than to remain perfectly pure with garments unspotted by the flesh! God was with him and the next result was it enabled him to act grandly. Wherever he is, he does the right thing and does it splendidly. If he is a slave, his master finds that he never had such a servant! If he is in prison, those dungeons were never charmed by the presence of such a ministering angel! If he is exalted to be with Pharaoh, Pharaoh never had such a chancellor of the finances of Egypt—never were Egyptian finance so prosperous! In such a manner did God help Joseph that he was enabled to fulfill a glorious destiny, for if Noah was the world's second father, what shall we say of Joseph, but that he was its foster nurse? The human race had died of famine if Joseph's foresight had not laid by, in store, the produce of the seven plenteous years, for there was a famine over all lands! The wisdom of Joseph nourished all mankind! It was no mean position for the young Hebrew to occupy—to be manager of the commissariat of the whole known world! If God is with us, we shall fulfill a noble destiny, too. It may not be so widely known, so visible to human eye, but life is always ennobled by the presence of God! Also it gave Joseph a very happy life, for taking the life of Joseph, all through, it is an enviable one. Nobody would think of putting him down among the miserable. If we had to make a selection of unhappy men, we certainly should not think of Joseph! No, it was a great life and a happy life—and such will yours be if God is with you.

And, to finish, God gave Joseph and his family a double portion in Israel, which never happened to any other of the 12 sons of Jacob. Jacob said, “And now your two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, which were born unto you in the land of Egypt before I came unto you into Egypt are mine; as Reuben and Simeon they shall be mine,” thus making each of them into a tribe. Ephraim and Manasseh each stood at the head of a tribe as if they had been actually sons of Jacob! Levi is taken out of the 12, and provision is made for the Levites as servants of God. And then Ephraim and Manasseh are put in, so that Joseph's house figures twice among the twelve! There are two Josephs in Israel but only one Judah! Joseph has a double portion of the kingdom! Those who begin early with God, stand fast to the end and hold to God both in trouble and prosperity, shall see their children brought to the Lord—and in their children they shall possess the double—yes, the Lord shall render unto them double for all they may lose in honor for His name's sake. It may be they shall live to see the hand of the Lord upon their children and their children's children! And to them shall be fulfilled the Word of God, “In you shall Israel bless, saying, God make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh.” Let us seek after a double part with God's people by keeping heartily with them. Who is willing to suffer with them that he may reign with them? Who is willing to cast the riches of Egypt behind his back that he may have a double portion in the Promised Land, the land flowing with milk and honey?

I think I hear some of you say, “Here I am, sir. I shall be glad enough to share with God's people, be it what it may.” Carry Christ's cross and you shall wear Christ's crown! Go with Him through the mire and through the slough, and you shall be with Him in the palaces of glory! You shall share a double portion with Him in the day of His appearing. This can only be because the Lord is with you—that must be the beginning and end of it! “The Lord was with Joseph”—O Lord, be with us! O You, whose name is Emmanuel, God With Us, be with us from now on and forever! Amen and Amen!

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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